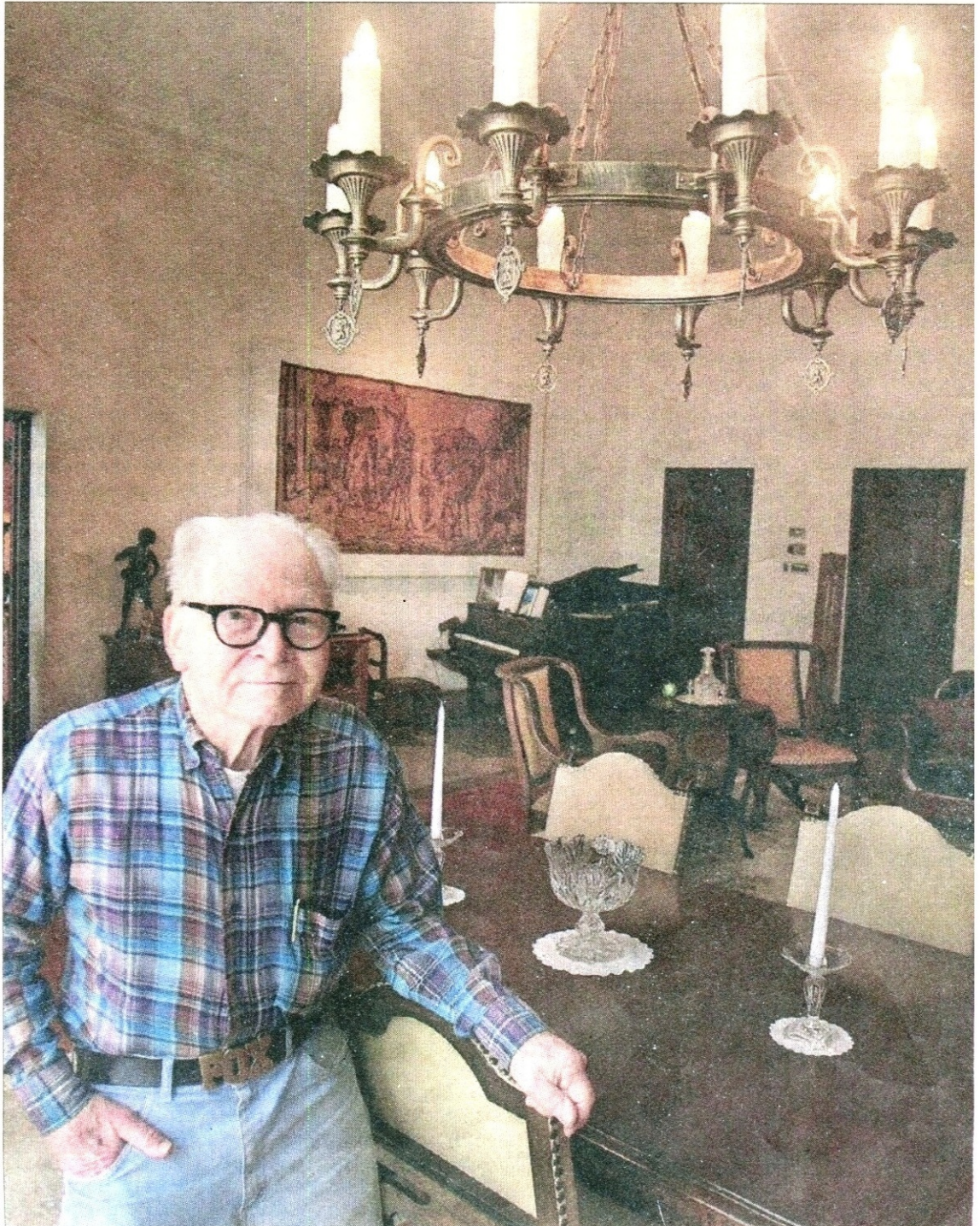


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Joe Patten lived in an apartment inside the Fox Theatre until his death this spring. The furnishings in his home will be auctioned off this week. PHIL SKINNER PSKINNER CQ



A piece of history

Phantom of the Fox's furnishings go on sale starting this week.

By Bo Emerson

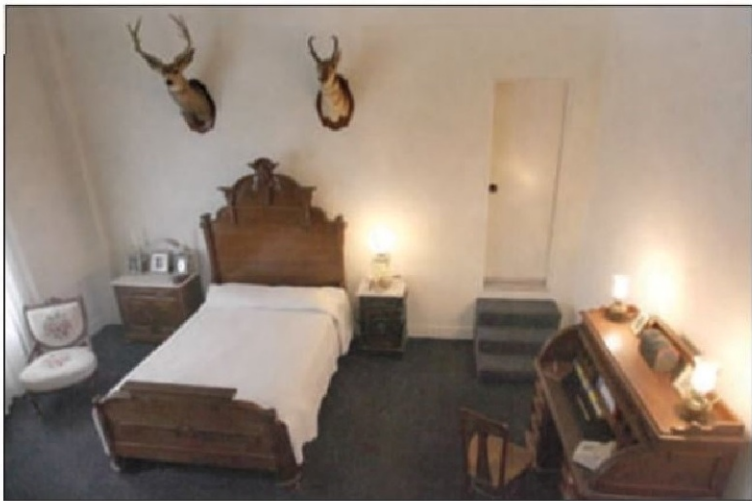
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Joe Patten, the Phantom of the Fox, lived a magical life.

His home was a palace, decorated with minarets and gold leaf. His entertainment: any show taking place at the Fox Theatre. He had his own box seat, accessible through a secret passageway from his bedroom.

Charged with repairing and maintaining the Fox's fabulous organ, Patten lived in an apartment that he built inside the theater itself. His apartment stretched through three stories and spread over 3,640 square feet, arrayed rather haphazardly through the nonpublic areas of the Fox building.

Patten, who died this spring, filled that home with antiques, art



The bedroom of Joe Patten's apartment in the Fox Theatre has a door, at right, that leads through a secret passageway and to his private box where he could watch any performance, even sold out ones. (BEN GRAY/AJC STAFF)

and musical instruments, including his own Hammond organ that he kept in his bedroom.

This week, Patten's furnishings are going on sale, and interested

buyers will have a chance to own a part of Fox history.

Patten continued on D5

Patten

continued from D1

There are 110 items, according to Gary Braswell, owner of Peachtree & Bennett, the company handling the sale. Among the noted offerings:

■ A Chickering player piano with an Ampico mechanism.

■ A hand-painted 19th century combination safe.

■ A print of a Hovsep Pushman still-life, signed in pencil by the artist.

There are rooms full of lamps, bronze sculptures and other furnishings. Braswell's favorite item is the vintage safe, a 5-foot-tall behemoth that probably weighs 1,000 pounds.

"He had had it hoisted in through a window," Braswell said. "Whoever buys it, it will cost \$1,500 just to get it hoisted back out through a window."

Patten also owned a fleet of cars, including a Rolls-Royce and a vintage gull-wing Mercedes, which are not included in this sale.

The Fox is a rococo masterpiece, and Patten found furniture that was appropriate for such a home. "They are sort of theatrical furnish-

ings that fit the space," Braswell said.

A Navy veteran, Patten worked after the war installing X-ray equipment in hospitals around the country. He moved to Atlanta in the early 1960s and began the painstaking restoration of the Fox Theatre's Mighty Moller organ as a volunteer project. In 1974, he helped found Atlanta Landmarks, the organization that saved the Fox from the wrecking ball.

Later that decade, Patten moved into the Fox building, constructing living space – at his own expense – in what was once a rough storage area and office space.

His apartment had its own entrance from Ponce de Leon Avenue. When Patten reached his 80s, the Fox tried to convince him to leave the theater, due to concerns about his health and limited access for emergency personnel up and down the stairs of his labyrinthine apartment.

After a legal battle, he was allowed to stay, until 10 days before his death, April 7, at age 89.

All bids for the auction must be placed online. Bidding ends at 2 p.m. Aug. 20. Those interested in the sale should visit companieses-tatesales.com.